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General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

Official Records

24th plenary meeting
Thursday, 1 October 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Snoussi (Morocco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 118 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/53/345/Add.5)

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): In a letter contained in document A/53/345/Add.5, the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communications contained in document A/53/345 and addenda 1 to 4, Dominica has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I call on the Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs of the Solomon Islands, His Excellency The Honourable Edmond Andresen.

Mr. Andresen (Solomon Islands): The word "globalization" did not appear in dictionaries of the English language 30 years ago. Globalization is now a reality, but multitudes do not benefit. To assist those peoples suffering its negative consequences, the United Nations requires skilled and innovative leadership. The General Assembly is fortunate that Mr. Opertti has been elected to lead it at its fifty-third session. His service to his country and intergovernmental organizations at the highest levels and his experience as a teacher, scholar and practitioner of international law, with extensive work in economic development and trade, as well as crime prevention and the protection of children, demonstrate the understanding and patience required here.

My delegation applauds the achievements of Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session who time and again demonstrated the dexterity and humour necessary for advancing the delicate process of United Nations reform, which Solomon Islands wholeheartedly supports. In the Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who continues to nurture that process, this Organization has found one of the great men of our time. We are honoured by his presence. Having often spoken strongly in favour of gender equality, my delegation rejoiced in the election of Ms. Louise Frechette as the first Deputy Secretary-General. She and the Secretary-General admirably represent the indispensable Secretariat.

On the eve of the new millennium, many developing countries continue to experience difficult economic,

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environmental and social problems. The lack of capital resources, crushing debt, external economic shocks and the fall in development assistance retard the growth of the economies of many least developed countries. The small island developing States continue to experience growth in drug and other transborder crimes. Moreover, our people face the ever present threat of natural disaster, such as the devastating tsunami that recently struck Papua New Guinea, our nearby neighbour.

We are a village people feeling the impact of globalization. The vulnerability of small island developing States to external economic shock is indeed real. Our tiny economy means a narrow human and non-human resources base and a limited domestic market. We are dangerously exposed to external economic developments in trade, capital flows and technology. Limited in our capacity to stabilize our domestic economy, we are especially sensitive to and dependent on the international situation. Our inability to effectively deal with the impacts of the Asian financial crisis demonstrates our vulnerability. The drop in my country's export revenue further undermines our difficult financial and economic situation. Well-designed and carefully monitored international standards and codes of conduct for capital flows and private financial management are essential. Without such regulatory measures, the prospects that the least developed countries will benefit from globalization and trade liberalization remain bleak. We face even further marginalization.

The Alliance for Change Government of Solomon Islands is well aware that whether we and other least developed countries succeed in effectively using the opportunities and mitigating the risks offered by the new world trading system depends largely on our success in making major macroeconomic policy reforms and overcoming deficiencies. To stimulate private sector involvement and the active participation of indigenous Solomon Islanders, the Government has launched a reform programme incorporating sound banking and financial practices conducive to economic growth and stability. The public sector is being restructured to create more efficient, responsive and accountable governmental administration.

We cannot succeed, however, without significant bilateral and multilateral assistance. The experience of other economies that have undertaken similar programmes shows that the reforms can be accelerated by assured markets for traditional products as well as access to new markets and capital. Moreover, multilateral agencies such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) can assist significantly in enhancing competitiveness and capacity-building.

Communications and information technology are, of course, essential for economic revitalization, especially so for Solomon Islands and other small island developing States remote from major markets and financial centres. My Government is committed to the development of efficient and cost-effective telecommunication networks as a catalyst for economic and social progress. We are also supporting long-distance education by radio and campaigns to reduce and eliminate illiteracy.

Sustainable development and the scientific management of our forest and marine resources remain high priority matters for my Government. The 922 islands and atolls of the Solomons stretch over 1.35 million square kilometres of ocean. Fisheries are essential for our economy. Last April, Parliament enacted legislation to control the exploitation of our fish resources and to maximize the benefits for our people. Protecting the fragile marine ecosystem from pollution is a major concern. With the assistance of the UNDP, a study will soon be undertaken to assess the potential danger to the marine environment posed by the large quantity of submerged ordnance from the Second World War. Projects to encourage ecotourism as well as the processing of forest products within the Solomon Islands are being considered.

The special session of the General Assembly next year to review the overall implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States promises to be an important occasion to assess the progress made in the last five years. Solomon Islands will participate actively in the preparatory work and in the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the donors conference on small island developing States.

Natural disaster remains the greatest environmental threat to the peoples of many small island nations. We face such calamities as tidal waves and volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, droughts and floods and rise of the sea level from climate warming. During the past year, shortages of water and food caused by El Niño severely affected Solomon Islands and several other countries in the region, especially where cyclones had struck earlier. Intensified international cooperation in early warning systems, disaster mitigation and management strategies are needed. We strongly support the renewal of the

United Nations International Decade for Disaster Reduction and related initiatives.

Climate change remains an issue demanding urgent and concrete global collective attention. The Kyoto Protocol, which Solomon Islands signed a few days ago, is a positive step within the climate protection process, but it must be understood to be only one of several. Crucial actions, besides the early ratification of the Protocol by all parties, include the strengthening of emission reduction targets and commitment to agreed time frames by industrialized countries and the development and transfer of appropriate, affordable and environmentally sound technologies. International commitments to energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy sources remain key objectives. For small island developing States to meet their obligations, adequate resources must be generated through the mechanisms provided by the Protocol and the Global Environment Facility. These are priority issues for the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, meeting in Buenos Aires next month.

Other potential disasters concern us as well. The proliferation of nuclear weapons is especially troubling to my Government. Solomon Islands is committed to the elimination of these weapons and is proud of the part it took at the International Court of Justice on the issue of nuclear weapons. These instruments of terror are creating insecurity in our region. We are also committed to the elimination of biological and chemical weapons. The coming entry into force next March of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction is splendid news indeed, and we thank Austria, Canada, Norway and South Africa for their extraordinary efforts.

In our peaceful islands, the noise of any conflict resounds loudly and threateningly. We are indeed pleased by the Bougainville peace agreement, which New Zealand skilfully helped to negotiate with the important assistance of Australia, Fiji and Vanuatu. Crucial for the success of this effort was the willingness of the Government of Papua New Guinea and the other parties to work in good faith. We also thank France for agreeing to a timetable for the independence of New Caledonia.

The Alliance for Change Government strongly condemns international terrorism in any form or manifestation. We deplore in the strongest terms what happened in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam. Solomon Islands supports the call by previous speakers for the international community, in particular the United Nations, to take a leading role in combating terrorism. At the same time, we recognize the need to understand the conditions in which terrorism is rooted and to change them. The desperate acts of men and women have desperate causes.

International partnership is also required in fighting the world's illicit drug trade. The declaration adopted at the twentieth special session of the General Assembly calls for concrete efforts. My Government is taking the necessary steps at the national level, but the enhancement of our interdiction capabilities and the encouragement of alternative economic activities require practical international assistance.

The Solomon Islands delegation participated in the preparation of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, and we applaud its adoption in Rome. The challenge before us now is to ensure its effective implementation.

Half a century after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the progress achieved, although significant, is far from satisfactory for hundreds of millions of people. Many human rights do not exist, except on paper, for the over one billion persons who live in abject poverty. My Government is committed to upholding our people's fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the Solomon Islands Constitution. We strive to maintain human dignity. Although resource constraints hinder our ability to fulfil the reporting obligations of the international instruments to which we are a party, we will not fail to meet our human rights obligations. Nor will we be silent when the rights of others are denied.

We call once again for the representation and participation of the Republic of China on Taiwan in the United Nations and its agencies. When the General Assembly refuses to place this matter on its agenda, it denies to the nearly 22 million people of Taiwan their rights under the Charter of this Organization. It rejects the opportunity to foster peace and security in the Taiwan Strait through dialogue here at the United Nations. It turns its back on preventive diplomacy. Surely the General Assembly is better than this. The people of this politically stable, economically strong and technologically advanced democracy have amply demonstrated how much they have to offer their region and the world. With the new millennium nearly upon us, it is time to discard old patterns of thought if the Chinese motherland is to reunite

peacefully. My Government will continue to appeal to the United Nations to seriously consider and recognize the legitimate right of the people of the Republic of China on Taiwan to have a voice in this international arena.

During the "reform Assembly", Solomon Islands supported the proposals of the Secretary-General. My delegation actively participated in the Open-ended Working Group on the Security Council. Reform of the Council should move boldly toward greater democracy and transparency. Expansion of its membership must reflect equitable geographical representation, and close thought needs to be given to the composition of the regional groups. If the veto cannot be decently buried, it should be restricted to Chapter VII questions.

The Secretary-General's proposal for a Millennium Assembly in September 2000 to identify priorities for United Nation action is refreshing. Critical for the success of the Assembly will be the two years of international dialogue, involving the widest possible spectrum of participants, leading up to it. The dialogues must truly be dialogues and not long series of monologues in which people talk past one another. A leading candidate for one of the priorities to be adopted by the Millennium Assembly is debt forgiveness for the heavily indebted poor countries. Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom are to be commended for their recent debt-forgiving actions. We also appreciate the Nordic countries who have fulfilled their targets and commitments for official development assistance.

Solomon Islands celebrated the twentieth anniversary of its independence last July. The past two decades have been difficult but peaceful. My Government wishes to acknowledge the contribution of the international community, especially our development partners, including the non-governmental organizations. We especially thank our citizens for their patience and support towards our development endeavours. We are committed to strengthening these partnerships. We must work together to meet the challenges of the next millennium successfully.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on His Excellency Chief Antonio Deinde Fernandez, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Fernandez (Central African Republic): I take pleasure in congratulating Mr. Opertti on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, and I pledge my delegation's full cooperation. I commend his predecessor, Mr. Udovenko, for bringing the fifty-second session of the General Assembly to a successful conclusion. I take great pleasure in expressing my pride in our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. His leadership and many achievements during the short period of his tenure are highly commendable.

Just as this session of the General Assembly coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it also coincides, providentially, with the fiftieth anniversary of the commencement of peacekeeping operations by the United Nations. These coincidences are striking because, while one was envisaged in the Charter of our Organization and was the subject of painstaking negotiations, the other was a chance development, not having been envisaged in the Charter. Yet both have had a profound effect on the influence of the United Nations in global affairs and on the perception of the Organization by those whom it was established to serve and who were identified in the opening words of the Charter as "We the peoples of the United Nations".

The double celebration this year should also enable us to appreciate better the interrelationship between human rights and peacekeeping. There can be no question of human rights being enjoyed in a situation of conflict. Put another way, conflicts create conditions for the most outrageous violations of human rights, since, contrary to all international law and rationality, the most vulnerable in society — children, women and the aged — are often targeted and deprived of the most basic of human rights, the right to life. As we define and refine our Organization's responsibilities in peacekeeping, which, by common consent, is now taken in its broadest sense to mean the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, let us always be conscious that the universal enjoyment of human rights, one of the major aspirations of humanity, cannot and will not be achieved unless we devote as much effort to the elimination of the conditions that provoke the violation of those rights.

I believe that it is with this fact in mind that international organizations, whether global, regional or subregional, have been devoting considerable time to devising effective means of preventing, managing and resolving conflicts in their various area of competence. Of course, the United Nations, with its unique role as the only global Organization invested with authority for the maintenance of international peace and security, is, appropriately, taking the lead in these efforts. Following "An Agenda for Peace" (A/47/277) and its supplement

(A/50/60), and at the request of the Security Council, the Secretary-General presented to us at this session his report entitled "The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa", document A/52/871. The report represents a very comprehensive and incisive study of the causes of conflict in Africa. The recommendations therein, if implemented by African countries as well as by the United Nations, could reverse the pestilence of conflicts which are ravaging the continent.

In this connection, my delegation would like to underscore the role of the Security Council in dealing with African conflicts. While the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has demonstrated a commitment to taking the lead in the resolution of conflicts on the continent, the fact is that its Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution will take time and will require resources not immediately available to Africa if it is to evolve to its maximum capacity. In the meantime, the efforts of the subregional organizations, which are increasingly taking the initiative in their various regions, need to be adequately supported by the international community.

My country, the Central African Republic, has been the beneficiary of such an initiative, which was taken by a group of African countries, to deal with the internal conflicts that erupted with three successive army mutinies in 1996. The Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB), which was composed of troops from Gabon, Chad, Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal and Togo, was given strong logistic support by France. It operated in Bangui from January 1997 to April 1998 as both a force of interposition and a guarantor to ensure the observance of the peace accord which was brokered by four African heads of State. My delegation would like to pay very high tribute to the Presidents of Gabon, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Senegal and Togo for the great sacrifice they made in the interests of our continent.

I should also like to pay great tribute to France for its invaluable support of the African initiative. At the request of my head of State, and with the agreement of the inter-African group, the Security Council graciously consented to send a United Nations peacekeeping operation to replace the inter African force.

The United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA), which commenced operations in Bangui on 15 April 1998, is the first proactive mission established by the United Nations in Africa. It has been making a major contribution to the restoration of lasting peace and security in our country and has assisted the peace-building efforts of the Government and the people of the Central African Republic. It is a practical demonstration of the incisive observation of our Secretary-General, in his report entitled "The causes of conflicts and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa", to the effect that

> "the deployment of a multidisciplinary peacekeeping operation may well represent the best chance to establish peace and build a foundation for lasting development, based on respect for human rights and the rehabilitation of civic institutions." (*A/52/871, para. 37*)

A major step in the restoration of the institutions of State in our country is the organization of a free, fair and transparent legislative election. In his letter to the Secretary-General requesting the assistance of the international community in re-establishing peace and security, my President, Mr. Ange-Félix Patassé, invited the United Nations, *inter alia,* to supervise the legislative and presidential elections in the country. That request was a measure of both the confidence which we have in the United Nations and our commitment to a transparent democracy built on the freely expressed will of our people. I wish therefore to express my Government's satisfaction for the assistance of MINURCA in the preparations for the legislative elections. We are looking forward to the decision of the Security Council which will enable MINURCA to provide further assistance for the electoral process, thus giving all Central Africans the assurance of the freedom, fairness and transparency of this most important aspect of the democratic process.

Needless to say, United Nations assistance in the process is a worthwhile investment in good governance, which itself is the sure foundation for peace, security and development. No effort should therefore be spared by our Organization in rallying to the support of those Member States that are making genuine efforts to instal a system that in itself constitutes a conflict-prevention mechanism. The cost of such support, which also constitutes an investment in peace-building, is in the end much less, and the results more satisfying, than those of a fire-fighting response after the outbreak of a conflict.

Bearing these factors in mind, I wish to appeal, on behalf of my Government, to the Security Council to take a comprehensive approach that avoids a premature exit of MINURCA, thus compromising the objective for which

the Mission was installed in Bangui. My Government has exerted itself to fulfil the commitments made by President Patassé to transparency and accountability in his letter to the Secretary-General requesting the presence of the United Nations in our country.

One major result of those efforts was the positive judgment of the Bretton Woods institutions which permitted the conclusion last July of a long-sought accord on enhanced structural adjustment facility. Needless to say, this would not have been possible without the assurance of security given by the presence and the activities of MINURCA.

However, much remains to be done, and the presence and cooperation of MINURCA will be indispensable for success. Most important is the restructuring and retraining of our security services, both civil and military. The commencement by MINURCA of the retraining of the various categories of our police and gendarmerie services have already yielded some positive results, and the continuation of the programme, as is being done in other United Nations operations in other parts of the world, will prove an invaluable legacy of United Nations peace-building efforts in our country.

Africa should not be denied this benefit which emanates from the reappraisal of the components of comprehensive United Nations peacekeeping operations. Civilian police training programmes have become an essential element of these operations, but they have not been known to commence and end in a period of nine months. An African situation cannot be presumed to be different, particularly when it is in the region now considered to be most prone to the phenomenon of conflicts.

Besides, the restructuring of our armed forces is being commenced with the involvement of MINURCA, which was given a role to play by Security Council resolution 1182 (1998) of 14 July 1998. The joint committee consisting of representatives of the Government and of MINURCA is to elaborate the legal instrument which should form the basis for our defence policy and armed forces, as well as a comprehensive programme for a widely representative, national, and well-trained force that will also be a useful instrument for development. The hope of my Government is that the Security Council will allow MINURCA sufficient time to assist us in these indispensable peace-building endeavours. A withdrawal, as is being contemplated at this time, will not be in the interest of my country or of the Central African subregion, which is already in great turmoil. I cannot but recall once again the very pertinent observation of the Secretary-General in the report which he painstakingly compiled at the request of the Security Council:

> "the deployment of a multidisciplinary peacekeeping operation may well represent the best chance to establish peace and build a foundation for lasting development, based on respect for human rights and the rehabilitation of civic institutions." (ibid.)

The Acting President: (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Maldives, His Excellency Mr. Fathulla Jameel.

Mr. Jameel (Maldives): Allow me first of all to congratulate Mr. Didier Opertti on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly. His election to that high office demonstrates not only the support that Uruguay enjoys in the international arena, but also the confidence and trust that the members of the Assembly have in his ability to guide the work of this session to a successful conclusion. Allow me also to record my delegation's profound gratitude and appreciation to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, for the exemplary manner in which he steered the work of the General Assembly throughout the past year.

I would also like to take this opportunity, on behalf of my delegation, to express our sincere thanks and admiration to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his untiring work and dedication in promoting the cause of this Organization. The Secretary-General deserves every assistance and cooperation from all the States Members of the Organization in his endeavours to fulfil the enormous responsibilities that we have placed upon his shoulders in achieving the goals of the United Nations in a world full of political unrest, ethnic conflicts and natural disasters.

From the forest fires in South-East Asia, Europe and North America to the horrendous floods and droughts in Asia, Africa and the Americas, we have been witnessing a drastic increase in the number of natural disasters occurring in various regions of the world with immense loss to human life and property. The excessive effects of the environmental phenomena known as El Niño and La Niña are sweeping across four continents with deadly consequences. Record-breaking temperatures around the globe have spared no country. My country also experienced record high temperatures early this year,

bleaching and killing coral reefs and causing enormous imbalance in the ever so fragile ecosystem that surrounds our tiny islands.

The Maldives may be situated outside the cyclone belt; we may have no rivers to flood, volcanoes to erupt or large forests to burn. But my country is as vulnerable to natural disasters as any other. Indeed, for the past decade we have lived with the fear of being slowly engulfed by the rising waters of the mighty Indian Ocean that surrounds us. Our fears have become more alarming since we have seen the death and destruction caused by the tsunami in Papua New Guinea and the devastating floods in Bangladesh. We have been forced to wonder what would happen if such a disaster struck our tiny, low-lying country.

When my President addressed this Assembly on the impending dangers of global warming and sea level rise over a decade ago, the extent of the threat posed by climate change was not yet widely known or accepted. Today we note that the realities of global warming are being acknowledged by scientists and politicians all over the world. However, mere acknowledgement of the danger is not enough. As we have stated repeatedly over the years, if we are to arrest and reverse this lurking threat, we need the unwavering commitment and cooperation of the entire international community. It is important that we fully and urgently implement the commitments that we ourselves have undertaken at various international conferences. In this regard, I urge the international community, and especially the industrialized countries, to honour their commitments without any further delay. My delegation believes that full and unconditional implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States is essential for the continued development of those countries. My country, for its part, has done and will continue to do everything that is required of it to contribute to this goal, and we hope that the other Members of this Organization will fulfil their commitments.

Although we were happy with some of the agreements reached at the Kyoto Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change last year, I regret to say that we were not fully satisfied with the achievements there. We accepted the Kyoto Protocol because we felt that it contained some important elements that deserved recognition and implementation, and because it is the best negotiated agreement available at present. In order to demonstrate our firm commitment to the climate change negotiations, we went one step further and signed the Kyoto Protocol as the first signatory State. We call upon all States to become parties to the Protocol and implement the targets specified in it.

In our small island States, the environment and the economy are intertwined very closely. Tourism and fishing are the two dominant economic sectors in the Maldives, and in a number of other small island States as well. For the Maldives, the tourism sector has been the main source of foreign exchange earnings and has accounted for more than 40 per cent of gross domestic product. Effects of global warming such as sea level rise, beach erosion, coral bleaching, increasing stress on coastal ecosystems, salinization of freshwater aquifers and damage to infrastructure from tropical storms are, however, threatening to jeopardize the viability and the long-term sustainability of our tourist industry. Given the limited availability of resources, many small island developing States, including the Maldives, are not in a position to carry the burden of the high cost of environmental protection on their own. Therefore, we are fully convinced that without adequate, new and additional financial resources, transfer of environmentally sound technology on concessional and preferential terms, and provision for human resources development, even the mere survival of our countries will be impossible.

The vulnerability to external factors of the economies of small island developing States, especially the least developed countries among them, is a well-known fact. Globalization, coupled with the ecological fragility of small island developing States, has marginalized those countries from the present multilateral trading system. Exports from least developed countries have grown far more slowly than world trade over the past two decades, resulting in a continued decline in their share of world trade. Market access for least developed countries is becoming narrower. Poverty still remains a stumbling-block in their quest for achieving sustainable social and economic development. Therefore, we would like to take this opportunity to call upon the major players in the world economy and upon our development partners to pay special attention to assisting small island States and other least developed countries in their efforts to become integrated into the world economy.

When gross domestic product is used as an indicator to determine the developmental status of a country, the small island developing States may appear to be more prosperous than they really are. We believe that the criteria now used by the Committee for Development Policy in identifying least developed countries do not take

into consideration the special circumstances of the small island developing States and their vulnerability.

The Committee has already recommended the graduation of four small island developing States from the list of least developed countries. The Maldives is, unfortunately, one of them. The irony of this is that the economies of these countries are heavily dependent on one or two industries, which may be extremely vulnerable to global economic and environmental changes and other external factors. Moreover, while the Committee itself has identified the obstacles to integration into the global economy and has called for continued official development assistance for least developed countries for at least another 10 years, some of the countries most in need of such assistance have been earmarked for graduation by the year 2000. My delegation feels that it would be grossly unfair to graduate countries from least developed country status unless they are able to sustain the momentum of growth that they have been able to achieve. Furthermore, the criteria which were adopted in 1991 need to be reviewed in the context of the increased pace of globalization during the 1990s. Until such time as a vulnerability index is developed, it would be very imprudent to graduate any small island States.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a major milestone in the promotion and protection of human rights, providing an essential basis for democracy, freedom and justice. Human rights apply without regard to race, gender, creed, age, colour or economic status. But everywhere we look — north, south, east or west — the reality often falls short of the ideal. Therefore, we must redouble our efforts to promote and protect human rights the world over.

The Maldives remains firmly committed to the cause of promotion and protection of human rights. I am happy to report that this year a new Constitution has come into force in the Maldives, providing stronger safeguards for civil liberties and the fundamental rights of the people, and strengthening the foundations and processes of our democracy. We have also been able to achieve remarkable progress in the realization of social, economic and cultural rights of the people through continued economic development and social progress. We believe that democracy, development and peace are essential for the realization of human rights.

The question of reform of the Organization has been on the agenda of the General Assembly for quite some time. Although the process of reform has proved to be a difficult one, my delegation does not wish to see it prolonged, for we believe that its momentum cannot be maintained indefinitely. However, it is important that we remain focused on the central issue of making this Organization ready and capable of delivering the promise of peace, justice and prosperity for all human beings, irrespective of their colour, race, gender or belief, and the promise of providing the means to protect our environment and enjoy our fundamental freedoms. This means that reform should cover the United Nations system in its entirety.

On the specific question of the reform of the Security Council, my delegation appreciates the efforts of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council. However, we remain concerned about the lack of progress in its proceedings, and are worried about the prevailing difficulties which are preventing an early agreement on this important issue. We remain convinced of the importance of the early and successful conclusion of the efforts to make the Security Council more responsive to and representative of the current world realities in order to make it more effective.

The commitment of the Maldives to arms control, disarmament and international peace and security remains unwavering. We are parties to all major multilateral instruments relating to arms control and disarmament. Since its inception, we have been faithfully and regularly contributing to the international Register of Conventional Arms. We signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) last year and are presently going through the process of ratifying it. This morning we have signed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

My delegation is happy to note the considerable progress the international community has made in the field of arms control and disarmament, and commends the bilateral initiatives that have been proved to be so successful. We believe that both bilateral and multilateral approaches must reinforce and complement each other if we are to successfully achieve complete disarmament.

In my delegation's view, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones of peace in various regions of the world is a positive step towards achieving nuclear disarmament. At this juncture, we particularly

stress the importance of the establishment of the proposed nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia, and take this opportunity to call upon all countries in South Asia to exercise maximum restraint and contribute to the realization of this noble objective.

In our quest to make the world a safer place we must not think only of the big Powers and the big bangs. Security is indivisible, whether in terms of geography or range of threat. The continuing scourge of terrorism, which rears its ugly and murderous head all too frequently, is as much the bane of international security today as is the spread of nuclear and other dangerous weapons. That terrorist groups may gain access to such weapons is an alarming thought. For small States the threats posed by terrorists are allied with and magnified by the activities of drug-traffickers, money-launderers and other manifestations of organized crime. That is why we have acceded to many international conventions against terrorism and are actively considering acceding to the remaining conventions.

I would also like to take this opportunity to repeat the appeal made by my President at the historic fiftieth anniversary commemorative session of this body for the signature and early ratification of the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries in order to expedite its entry in to force. My delegation believes that in the face of these threats it is in the interest of the international community to provide adequate safeguards for small States, which are in reality the front-line States against most of these evil deeds.

We are happy to see the establishment of the International Criminal Court. Those who perpetrate war crimes, genocide and other crimes against humanity must not be allowed to cross a border to safety or anonymity. This is why an international court that can systematically prosecute major war criminals wherever they are has to be established. This need has become more urgent in this post-cold-war period, which is characterized by the proliferation of conflicts of unprecedented ferocity. The horrifying crimes against humanity committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and elsewhere cannot be allowed to recur at any time or at any place. The perpetrators of those crimes should be brought to justice. My delegation strongly believes that the ultimate legal guarantee of peace and justice in the world lies in the strength and resolve of the international community and not in the strength and resolve of a single country.

In conclusion, I once again would like to stress the vulnerability of small island developing States. My delegation believes that urgent and immediate action is absolutely necessary to alleviate the difficulties faced by these countries due to environmental degradation. If the present-day predictions for climate change were to come true, the Maldives and many other small island countries would have to face the frightful reality of extinction. Time is running out. Let us do something immediately. Otherwise, we will be no more.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Mr. Seyoum Mesfin, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Mesfin (Ethiopia): I should like first of all to extend to Mr. Didier Opertti the Ethiopian delegation's congratulations on his well-deserved unanimous election to preside over the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. We are fully confident that under his guidance the work of this session of the General Assembly will meet with resounding success.

I should like also to express our appreciation to the outgoing President for the most effective guidance he provided to the fifty-second session of the General Assembly and for the most valuable contribution he has made in this regard.

We are indeed deeply indebted to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who has tried to inject new vitality into the United Nations and who has, under difficult circumstances, continued to make a difference at the helm of the Organization. We appreciate very deeply in particular what the Secretary-General has been doing to ensure that the voices of all those whose viewpoints needed to be heard are heard, and that there is a more effective cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

I wish in this regard to commend him with great satisfaction for what can only be called the historic report he has submitted on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. This report, on which the Secretary-General has deservedly already been congratulated by many, raises all those issues which are vital for the future of Africa and treats them with such frankness and transparency that I can only hope that we will all have the necessary resolve and commitment to follow up its recommendations and ensure their implementation.

We in Africa have made, over the past few years, tremendous efforts to change Africa's image and reality. Despite the apparent slips of the past few months, what has been achieved on our continent since the early 1990s should not be underestimated. This applies both to activities in the economic area as well as to the work for peace and stability on our continent.

The past few years have demonstrated quite vividly how most African countries, including my own, Ethiopia, have shown the necessary determination to create a domestic climate conducive to economic growth and development. There is today hardly any country in Africa which has not acknowledged that the economic future of countries lies in market-based and private-sector-driven economic transformation and which has not taken the appropriate steps to that end. It is indeed gratifying to note that the results, certainly in my own country, have been encouraging.

However, it is hardly disputable that our performance in the economic area has not by any means measured up to our expectations and that it has been far below what is needed to prevent hopelessness and despair on our continent, especially among the younger generation. Although the reasons that provide part of the explanation for this may not be wanting, it is nonetheless very obvious that the well-known limitations we face in international economic cooperation, in particular in the area of trade and in connection with the debt burden, constitute the major impediments to Africa's economic regeneration. Consequently, the Secretary-General has reiterated in his report that there is indeed an urgent need for political will to ensure sustainable growth and development in Africa, not only on our part as Africans but also on the part of the international community as a whole.

In the past few years we in Africa have also made every effort, in particular through subregional organizations, to work for peace and to prevent and contain conflicts. In this regard, the establishment by the OAU of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Africa has been a major step we have taken, and our achievement on this score over the past few years should not be underestimated.

In our own subregion, we have continued to exert the necessary efforts for peace in the Sudan and to assist the people of Somalia in achieving national reconciliation and establish a broad-based Government and a central authority. In both cases, while success has not been easily won, the efforts we are making have nonetheless continued because of the conviction, including on the part of our partners in the international community, that there is no effective alternative to these efforts carried out at the subregional level through the mechanism of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

But it is very clear that the gains, however small, made over the past few years in the area of peace and security in Africa have been tested very severely in the past few months. Developments in the Great Lakes region, most particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, represent some of the serious sources of concern we have in this regard. Nevertheless, we remain hopeful that a way out of this looming danger in the Great Lakes region will be found based on full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries of the region, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and on the full recognition of the security concerns of all countries of the region.

It is Ethiopia's firm conviction that there is no alternative as a guarantee for peace and amity among States to the scrupulous observance of all of the principles of international law governing inter-State relations.

However, the greatest danger for peace in this connection is not so much the violation of international law per se, but the response by the international community in the face of such violation. When the international community, for whatever reason, fails to respond to aggression and to violations of international law with the required indignation and resolve, then aggressors are sent, wittingly or unwittingly, the message that the principles of international law are not there to underpin the peace and that laws are there to be violated with impunity.

This has been the lesson that we have drawn from one of the major recent disappointments that we have had in the area of peace and security in Africa. I am, of course, referring here to the naked aggression by the State of Eritrea against Ethiopia on 12 May 1998. Despite the efforts by various parties, this aggression continues to portend the outbreak of a full-scale war between the two countries because, on the one hand, of Eritrea's intransigence in insisting that the peaceful resolution of the crisis must be linked to Ethiopia's acceptance of the loss of its sovereignty over a part of its territory and to the consequent appeasement of Eritrea, and, on the other, of the dangerous impression the

international community is conveying: that aggression entails not costs to the aggressor, but rewards.

The aggression committed by the Eritrean regime against Ethiopia is unprecedented in more ways than one. First, it is aggression that was not only unprovoked but was also carried out against a State that, until the day of the aggression, was a true friend of Eritrea — probably the only true friend Eritrea had until that day of infamy when it decided to stab Ethiopia in the back. Secondly, this is an aggression that, paradoxical as it may seem, was designed to impose Eritrea's will and policy on a country that is in no shape or form suited to play second fiddle to Eritrea. It is quite possible that Ethiopia's preoccupation with development and with the fight against poverty over the past several years might have created the wrong impression in the minds of Eritrea's leaders, with their fixation on muscle-flexing and military might.

Conscious of its responsibility not only for its own people but also for peace and the image of our subregion, Ethiopia has exerted and continues to exert the maximum possible effort to ensure the peaceful resolution of this crisis, which was created solely by the Eritrean aggression against Ethiopia and the subsequent occupation of Ethiopian territory. Our full cooperation with the various efforts made in this regard — ranging from the United States-Rwandan facilitation to the ongoing effort by the Organization of African Unity — attests to the maximum amount of self-restraint that Ethiopia has demonstrated under difficult circumstances and in the complete absence of a rational and reasonable partner for peace on the part of Eritrea since the early days of the aggression.

The origin of the crisis between Ethiopia and Eritrea is not in any bilateral dispute between the two countries; rather it is the result of aggression — an unprovoked aggression which constitutes a flagrant violation of international law. To many this Eritrean aggression against Ethiopia has been incomprehensible. But to those who, like us, are familiar with the internal Eritrean situation, the behaviour of the Eritrean Government stems directly from the total absence in Eritrea of the normal characteristics of a State. The absolute failure of institutions, the absence of the rule of law and the lack of accountability can explain the aggressive behaviour of the Eritrean leadership towards its neighbours ever since the establishment of Eritrea as an independent State. As a result, these factors also constitute the single most important cause for the current crisis between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The fact that aggression was committed against Ethiopia by Eritrea has been indisputable for some time now. This has been the position and conclusion of all those who have so far tried, under the difficult circumstances posed by Eritrea's obduracy and lack of civility, to make their good offices available as facilitators and as brokers of peace in this conflict. No one who has been intimately involved with these various efforts for peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea would fail to see that Eritrea has never, ever been prepared to give peace a chance. No one who has been close to the efforts made so far to resolve the crisis peacefully would fail to have noted not only the absolute disregard for peace on the part of the Eritrean authorities, but also their attempt to conceal the truth, their lack of transparency and their sheer failure to demonstrate the minimum decency towards all those who have tried to help. Nevertheless, it is indeed regrettable that some, jettisoning their principles, seem to have drawn the conclusion that, in the face of the known irrationality bordering on the insane in Eritrea, what needs to be done is to lean on Ethiopia, the victim of the aggression, to compromise on principles and to agree to the appeasement of the aggressor and to reward aggression.

Two things must not be overlooked by the international community with regard to the enormous implications of Eritrea's aggression against Ethiopia for international law and for the future of peace and stability in our subregion. First, it must be recognized that this is precisely a trap laid by the Eritrean authorities in the form of a deliberately designed game of chicken, calculated, these authorities hope, to end with rewarding aggression. Needless to say, Ethiopia refuses to play according to the Eritrean script, and we call upon the international community to take the same resolute stand.

Secondly, it should never be assumed that through appeasement war would be averted and that durable peace can be ensured in our part of the world. Although because of its recent history this part of the world admittedly needs peace most, it cannot be expected to pay any price to avoid war, in particular by accommodating aggressors. Clearly it stands to reason, and history has amply demonstrated, that war in the long run cannot be averted by appeasing aggressors.

It is a total illusion to believe that Eritrea will be tamed, and we are saying this from experience. One just has to look at Eritrea's track record of the past few years in our area. Eritrea's propensity to aggression manifested itself first in its belligerent attitude towards its neighbours

over the past seven years and has culminated in its most extreme form of aggression against Ethiopia. In the face of such a destructive attitude one may ask why such belligerence by Eritrea was tolerated for so long. The answer is that, since we believed that the transition from leading a liberation movement to running an independent State would take time, we somehow entertained the hope that the Eritrean leadership would mature over time, as is the case in almost all other similar circumstances. But our hopes were finally dashed on 12 May 1998. In light of this, we have absolutely no doubt that, if we fail to tell the Eritrean authorities in no uncertain terms that their unruly behaviour cannot be tolerated any longer, the result will be even greater instability and interminable conflict in the subregion, and it will have enormous implications for peace and stability in our continent.

That is why the Ethiopian Government and people firmly believe that this flagrant violation of international law by a small nation that is totally blinded by arrogance and led astray by a leadership that has concluded that brinkmanship will always pay should not be left unchallenged. On our part, whether the international community stands with us or not on the fundamental principle of preserving international law and resisting aggression, regardless of the consequences, we are prepared to stand alone, if need be on principle as well as for our national dignity.

This, as we all remember, would not be the first time for Ethiopia to be in such a situation. In this connection, one is reminded of Emperor Haile Selassie and the League of Nations following Italian aggression against Ethiopia in 1936. The measure proposed at the time against Italy was the imposition of an oil embargo, which certainly would have been effective in crippling Italian aggression against Ethiopia. Nevertheless, since appeasing Fascist Italy was the preferred option for the great Powers of the time, the proposal was rejected. Instead, in a clear demonstration of injustice unprecedented in the history of inter-State conflicts, an arms embargo was imposed by the League on both the aggressor, Italy, and the victim of aggression, Ethiopia.

As a result we all know, as history has recorded, this dismal failure of the League of Nations to prevent aggression was one of the causes which brought about the demise of the organization and later contributed to the outbreak of the Second World War. It is Ethiopia's hope that this shameful episode will not be repeated by the international community today, although the nature and scale of the challenge Ethiopia is facing today is radically different, and is not comparable to what it faced during those difficult days on the eve of the Second World War.

The United Nations is still grappling with various issues affecting international peace and security around the world. Among these, the situation in Angola is a cause for serious concern to us. The behaviour of UNITA clearly constitutes a dangerous trend which might lead to the derailment of the peace process — namely, the full implementation of the Lusaka Protocol. We urge the United Nations to exert the maximum effort to save the fragile situation in Angola and ensure the establishment of lasting peace and stability in that country.

On the situation in the Middle East, we hope every effort will be exerted towards the full implementation of the Oslo accords, with a view to establishing durable peace in the area.

With regard to the question of Western Sahara, it is our earnest hope that the proposed referendum on the future of the territory will be held as soon as possible to bring about a final and successful settlement of the issue.

As a founding member of this Organization, Ethiopia has always been prepared to contribute to the best of its ability to all efforts designed to make the United Nations and its various organs more effective and more representative. Accordingly, my country attaches great importance to the ongoing exercises aimed, among other things, at reforming and restructuring the Security Council. A satisfactory, fruitful and expeditious outcome of this process is indeed vital for the effectiveness, credibility and, I might add, the enhanced legitimacy of the world body.

For Ethiopia, and for all those who have trust in the efficacy of multilateralism, there is no alternative to the United Nations. The Organization should therefore be protected, and what it stands for — whether in the areas of economic cooperation, disarmament or human rights — should be promoted and fostered with all dedication and commitment. In this endeavour, Ethiopia will continue to be second to none in discharging its responsibilities to the United Nations in this and other activities of the Organization.

I therefore wish to conclude by renewing Ethiopia's commitment to the United Nations and to what it stands for.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jadranko Prlić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Prlić (Bosnia and Herzegovina): It is my privilege and honour to address the fifty-third session of the General Assembly on behalf of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

At the outset I would like to congratulate Mr. Didier Opertti on his election as President. His well-known skills and experience in international affairs guarantee the wise conduct of this session. Our gratitude goes to the outgoing President, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine.

Just a few days ago the outcome of the recent general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina was made public. We are satisfied with the fact that those important elections, conducted under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), passed practically without incident or disruption. According to the general assessment by the international and local monitors, we had free and fair elections.

A new chapter in the political life of Bosnia and Herzegovina is about to begin. The new Parliament and the new Council of Ministers will have to address without delay a number of issues of vital importance for our country. Indeed, at stake is the destiny of a country with a particular internal structure: three constitutive peoples, two entities and one internationally recognized State. Only through scrupulous respect for equal rights and adequate participation in power by the parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina can we achieve the goal, which has no credible alternative: a modern State based on the rule of law, parliamentary democracy, respect for human rights and a market economy. This will also open the door for integration into European and transatlantic institutions. The most encouraging sign in this direction was the recent Declaration of support by the European Union and the establishment of its Joint Task Force with Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It is obvious that we in Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot do this alone. We must prove to our friends and supporters from around the world that we can be a reliable, responsible partner in this joint project, which in the end should place Bosnia and Herzegovina in the family of democratic States. But it also must be remembered that, inevitably, those in Bosnia and Herzegovina who behave differently or against the rules will not be allowed to participate in this endeavour of crucial importance.

The question about the future of my country is being asked in many quarters of the world. The same question, but certainly with an additional existential and emotional charge, is in the air in Bosnia and Herzegovina itself.

There are no easy answers in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, since we are talking here about the future of a very specific country, the possible answer is at the same time both simple and complicated. It is simple because of the fact that whoever holds public office in Bosnia and Herzegovina is obliged to implement the provisions of the Dayton Agreement fully and unconditionally. On the other hand, it is complicated because it will, to a large extent, depend on good political will, a sense of historical responsibility and the determination of each player in the complex State structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina to do so.

Mr. Baudin (Senegal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Almost three years after the signing of the Peace Agreement, the consolidation of peace and the reconstruction process in Bosnia and Herzegovina is entering a new stage. From the very beginning, the military component was implemented well and an environment of overall security was created. Thus, we were able to focus our energy on the civilian aspects of the Agreement, which proved to be extremely complex. We went through the rough waters of various obstacles, mistrust, misunderstanding and obstruction. But it was also a time of the first signs of confidence-building and the establishment of the necessary foundation for a healthy partnership.

In spite of the often justified criticism regarding the pace of progress, one must recall some of the important positive steps that have been made: one flag, a common currency, common license plates, common passports, generally improved freedom of movement and significant reconstruction results. On the other hand, the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes of origin, the proper functioning of State institutions, an independent judicial system, and the uniform protection of human rights still represent major problems in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Therefore, with the elections behind us, the renewed political resolve and energy must be applied to finding a solution to all the aforementioned issues. A multi-ethnic, multicultural Bosnia and Herzegovina within both its entities, in which mutual respect, equality and

cooperation among the constitutive peoples and different ethnic groups are shared assets, will be the best answer to superficial theories on the inevitable clashes between different cultures and civilizations.

The continued presence of the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina is certainly needed. Without the generous help and support it has extended so far, little would have been achieved. The United Nations and its specialized agencies stand high among those that are doing their best to help Bosnia and Herzegovina overcome its problems. But the time has come to consider that one future path may lie in changing the donor-recipient relationship into a concrete, project-oriented joint venture, in which local companies and infrastructure could have a more substantial participation.

This would no doubt contribute to the faster economic rehabilitation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to reaching the level of self-sustainable growth. Better economic prospects will certainly enhance our ability to overcome many existing obstacles and to achieve the overall stability of the country; and the ultimate goal of handing over the business of running the country to the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina would be better served.

At a more global level, this is the way for Bosnia and Herzegovina to become a factor for stability in the region and an active partner in building security architecture on the continent. As has already been mentioned, we in Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot do this alone. But, hand in hand with the international community, we can all continue our journey into the next millennium with more hope and better prospects.

In less than two years, the century — full of achievements and unbelievable technological progress, but also a period of two world wars and a number of smaller but no less tragic conflicts — will be over. We are stepping into a new millennium with a lot of expectations, but also with heavy baggage.

Here, I would be morally and politically reckless if I did not highlight the tragic and increasingly alarming situation in the Kosovo region of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Events there certainly have a contaminating effect on Bosnia and Herzegovina, at least psychologically. However, the situation is in itself worthy of our great consideration and engagement, regardless of its impact on Bosnia and Herzegovina or beyond.

Lessons must have been learned from the international treatment Bosnia and Herzegovina received during our recent crisis. Decisiveness, urgency and the proper combination of tools and remedies available to the key factors must all be there in order for us to achieve a speedy and proper solution. The human, national and democratic rights of all the parties must be taken into consideration, as must the territorial integrity of all States in the region. No matter how we get there, all lasting solutions end with a political settlement — one which all the parties need to abide by, if not always enthusiastically support. We are there to help in any way we can and the active support of us all will be necessary.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the other hand, has tried to learn from its recent past. When you have to pay a high price for a lesson, you also learn well. Among other steps, Bosnia and Herzegovina has ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We now need to continue our efforts to decontaminate the ground, and the assistance of the international community is also essential in this endeavour.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's experience was also critical to the recent adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court in Rome. We played a vital and active role in Rome, since we are convinced that justice and reconciliation, legality and peace, are intertwined. The new Court should take into consideration the experiences of the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, whose impact on lasting peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina is critical.

We in Bosnia and Herzegovina are convinced that those responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law should be brought to justice, regardless of the ethnicity of the victims or perpetrators. We have a direct and decisive interest in securing compliance by all signatories, and all others who are obligated, with all their commitments under the peace Agreement, including full compliance with the International Tribunal.

One thing we can be proud of is our universal Organization, the United Nations, which, throughout this time, has been the main vehicle for promoting peace, cooperation and development on our planet. In the face of new challenges, we would like to see the United Nations even more efficient and instrumental in dealing with a number of global issues.

The struggle against terrorism, illegal arms and drug-trafficking and violations of human rights is in the forefront of our common agenda for a better future. The role of a dynamic, effective, well-focused United Nations is indispensable in that respect.

This year, we are also celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Thanks to that document and to the tireless activities of people around the world, human rights have become a genuine global issue, and ensuring their respect and protection is one of the most important ongoing tasks of the international community.

The end of this millennium in human history has witnessed a growing number of massive humanitarian emergencies. We need to draw conclusions from them because the flagrant violation of human rights and humanitarian law and the barbaric acts of savagery that we have witnessed in various parts of the globe in recent years are an affront to our common humanity.

Based on our own experience in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we have learned lessons that we must share with the international community as a part of our humanitarian duty. We owe it to ourselves and to our children. That is why my Government intends to propose for the favourable consideration of this Assembly a set of basic tenets of humanitarian action in emergency situations. The purpose is neither to duplicate nor to downgrade the ongoing efforts, but rather to supplement what exists and to enhance awareness of the need to adjust international norms and practices to new realities. We trust that all Member States will join us in this effort so that, together, we are able to contribute to the development of a new international humanitarian order.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guatemala, His Excellency Mr. Eduardo Stein Barillas.

Mr. Stein Barillas (Guatemala) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Omar Aguirre, of Bolivia; Lisa Malone, of Australia; Pablo Gorga, of Uruguay; Luis Escoto, of Spain; Pedro Ruz, of Chile; together with Guatemalans Rolando Palacios and Celso Martínez, all of them United Nations personnel stationed in Guatemala to collaborate in the verification of the peace agreements, gave their lives in carrying out their mission, when they died in a tragic air accident, on 17 March 1998, as they were travelling to a remote area to perform their duties. With the Assembly's permission, I would like to pay a sincere tribute to those who, at a time of peace, generously gave their lives for peace in Guatemala.

Equally moved by the destruction left by hurricane Georges in its passage through the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and other Caribbean territories and the southern United States, I wish to express the solidarity of the people and the Government of Guatemala with those who suffered economic losses and the inconsolable pain of the loss of human lives.

Guatemala feels honoured to welcome Mr. Opertti to the roster of eminent persons who have had the privileged responsibility of conducting the debates of this forum throughout its existence. His election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, while showing recognition of his great diplomatic talent, is the natural result of the efforts that he and his country have made in promoting understanding among the peoples and the nations of the world.

We are fully convinced that our Organization will benefit from his ample experience as one of the supporters of the principles of the inter-American system. This guarantees that the excellent work of his predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, will be continued, and we wish to express our appreciation for the excellent manner in which he conducted the work of the General Assembly during the year of his mandate.

This is the second time that Guatemala has addressed the General Assembly since the signature of the peace agreements that put an end to the fratricidal struggle that senselessly tore our nation apart for almost four decades. I must again acknowledge the solidarity the international community showed throughout the process, especially during the difficult and protracted task of implementing the accords, which will lead us to the reconstruction of our society and the fulfilment of our highest aspirations for economic development, equity and justice.

The United Nations and the Government and the people of Guatemala have worked together in the implementation of the peace agreements. Under the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) we have gone forward with firm and sure steps in complying with the accords, and it is with great satisfaction that I can report to the Assembly that the timetable of the accords is being met with sure progress.

That is why we welcome the recent report of the Secretary-General on the status of verification of the peace agreements in Guatemala (A/53/288), and we strongly support his recommendation that the General Assembly authorize the renewal of MINUGUA's mandate until 31 December 1999.

As a Member of an Organization whose main objective is to preserve peace among nations, our own experience of living in peace leads us to reaffirm our belief in multilateralism as a genuine form of pooling efforts for coexistence among the peoples of the world. To the ordinary citizen of Guatemala, regional organizations, sister nations and international commitments are no longer regarded as abstractions, instead becoming elements of our reality which, added to our political and cultural experience, is producing a new synthesis of the local with the global. That new synthesis in Guatemala means peace, which is rooted in the happy conjunction of the ancestral pacifism of our own ancient cultures with the universally accepted ethical values promoted in the various centres of multilateral convergence, both regionally and globally.

These positive results have also been factors in accelerating our involvement in regional cooperation initiatives, especially in the process of Central American integration, in which Guatemala, determined to achieve it, has made significant efforts, motivated by the view shared by the other actors in the process that a united Central America will be much more capable of facing the challenges of globalization for the benefit of our peoples.

Believing also that the centres of multilateral administration are fundamental to promoting peace and development, we have been motivated to participate actively in the tasks of consolidating the work of the Association of Caribbean States, an organization of 25 member States sharing the Caribbean Sea as their common heritage and having the most varied cultural and linguistic traditions. This Association has decided to unite in order to explore the regional potential for promoting conditions that will improve the living standards of their citizens.

We do not have time to continue listing the various regional integration initiatives. However, they exemplify the importance that Guatemala attaches to multilateral bodies in efforts to coexist under conditions of justice and equality and in an environment which is increasingly interactive and interdependent. The global condition of the contemporary world is no longer expressed recurrently through periodic events, but is rather a daily constant that, every minute, concerns all individuals on the planet. It poses challenges that may be regarded as either opportunities or threats and that elicit a full spectrum of responses, from naive enthusiasm to irrational fundamentalist resistance.

That is why multilateral administration requires renewed, flexible and participatory institutions that respond to the dynamic conditions derived from the development of international relations in the post-cold-war era. Thus, Guatemala has followed with interest modernization efforts within this Organization. We have enthusiastically assumed the responsibility of contributing to the implementation of administrative reforms through a pilot project.

We are pleased at the progress that has been made in this area, and we would like to express once again our appreciation for the support we have received from the agencies of the United Nations system, which, under the coordination of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), are helping us with the process of peace and development and making system-wide reform a reality in our country.

The work undertaken by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in response to the concerns of Member States regarding the modernization of our Organization deserves our very special recognition. Last July, the Secretary-General honoured us with a visit to Guatemala, and we saw for ourselves the determination and commitment he demands of himself in order to strengthen our Organization and the clear vision of the future that guides his efforts towards the new millennium.

Guatemala agrees with other Members on the need to continue the deliberations on the reform of the Security Council. We have studied with interest the various proposals that have been presented, and we hope that despite the differences in their current positions, Member States will be able to reach the necessary level of agreement and understanding in order to bring about a reform that is equitable for all regions and that demonstrates the democratic will that should prevail in the Organization.

I must emphasize the important role that the United Nations must play in the creation, codification and application of the norms of international law. A greater involvement by the Organization in this matter would promote greater creativity on the part of Member States in confronting shared problems and would eliminate legal ambiguities that could enable national legislatures to

dictate international laws which would then be imposed on less developed countries. We call upon the community of nations to redouble its efforts in this area.

At the threshold of the new millennium, and in response to an international society that is increasingly interdependent, we call for a more equitable and just order in the sphere of trade, with clear rules and equal opportunities for all regions and States. This is the only way to promote development in areas where there is an imperative need to eliminate poverty and build more just societies.

As the President of Colombia expressed very well in this Assembly, development should take into account the human side of our societies. We must keep striving to accomplish more internal equity in the distribution of resources and burdens. But it is increasingly difficult, under present conditions, to comply with the demands of the international institutions that finance development, without sacrificing the lives of our people, who are already, for the most part, mired in poverty. We are also greatly alarmed to see an insecure and uncertain worldwide economic situation in which dubious speculative practices continue to wreak havoc in the absence of effective controls by those responsible. The world is filling up with products that populations and countries no longer have the means to acquire, and there is no longer any place for our small economies.

Now that the Central American countries are making efforts on various fronts to accomplish our integration and liberalize our economies, and as we strive to leave years of armed confrontation behind us and adapt to the demands of the world market, our products must have fair, non-discriminatory access to world markets, and our potential as a competitive destination for productive investment must be recognized.

One of the most important subjects on the agenda of the General Assembly is that of disarmament. Guatemala, together with the other Central American countries, condemns any type of nuclear testing. We expressed our concern over the recent tests carried out in other continents. Such activities do not contribute to the peace or the nuclear disarmament that most of the Member States of this Organization desire.

Guatemala was also among the first countries to sign the Ottawa Convention prohibiting the manufacture and use of anti-personnel mines. We ask those countries that have not yet done so to become parties to this Convention.

We also note with great satisfaction that the concerns of Member States relating to the subject of weapons are growing in scope to include the proliferation, illegal traffic and abuse of small arms. Guatemala is extremely interested in the quest for a solution to this problem, and we believe that the Oslo platform can generate satisfactory responses.

We are extremely concerned to see that although to a large extent it has been possible to overcome internal conflicts in most Member States, the international community continues to be shocked by such horrendous acts of international terrorism as those that recently caused much bloodshed in Africa and Northern Ireland. In addition to condemning and unanimously rejecting these vile and cowardly actions that primarily affect innocent human beings who have nothing to do with the causes that are invoked, the international community must observe the resolution of the Rome Conference on the Statute of the International Criminal Court to the effect that

> "terrorist acts, by whomever and wherever perpetrated and whatever their forms, methods or motives, are serious crimes of concern to the international community". *(A/Conf.183/10, annex I, section E, second paragraph)*

As is well known, Guatemala was one of the last staging grounds of the cold war, where transnational networks operated with impunity in support of the dirty war taking place inside and outside of the country. We wish to express once again our firm and emphatic political resolve that never again will our territory be used to prepare any type of aggression against any other country.

As the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights draws near, Guatemala reaffirms its resolute commitment to honouring the principles contained in the Declaration. One of the most important tasks of the Government of President Alvaro Arzú has been to promote fulfilment of and respect for human rights in all aspects of life in our country. The human rights dimension has been integrated into all spheres of civic life, and, although we still have much to do in that area, we have certainly made great progress, promoting the full blossoming of our rich ethnic, multicultural and multilingual diversity.

The United Nations, founded in 1945 on the ideal of keeping peace in the world and with the fundamental role

of ensuring that all nations can coexist on the basis of mutual respect among States, is the highest expression of representation by all peoples. However, 53 years after the birth of the United Nations, there are still territories whose citizens are not represented here. My country is aware of the divisions that persist between brothers in the Middle East, Asia and Africa. We hope that their differences can be resolved through dialogue and in a peaceful manner, so that, without any form of rejection or discrimination, all the peoples of the world may be represented in the United Nations.

I wish to mention in particular the situation of the 22 million citizens of the Republic of China on Taiwan, as well as the importance and soundness of their economy amid so much financial uncertainty in that region.

Our Organization must face great challenges as the new century draws near. We hope that, with the goodwill of all Member States, we can resolutely embark on it so as to ensure the survival of the human race, as well as lives lived in peace, the protection of our environment, economic growth and sustainable development. Only in that way will we achieve the dream of those who, full of ideals, founded the United Nations in San Francisco in 1945.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is the Chairman of the delegation of Grenada, His Excellency Mr. Robert Millette, on whom I now call.

Mr. Millette (Grenada): My delegation congratulates the Secretary-General and his staff on their efforts to make the United Nations more responsive to the needs of Member States and of the international community, especially the developing nations.

My delegation also wishes to congratulate Mr. Didier Opertti on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. We also wish to thank Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, the former Foreign Minister of Ukraine, for his exceptional performance in the conduct of the proceedings of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

The philosopher Thomas Aquinas admonished us thus:

> "It is better to light up than merely to shine; to deliver unto others contemplated truths, than simply to contemplate."

In the context of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in obedience to that admonition by Aquinas, the Grenada delegation humbly offers to this noble Assembly, for its reflection, a few contemplated truths in relation to human interaction within individual societies, as well as among nations.

In his *Lines Written in Early Spring*, the poet William Wordsworth wrote:

> "I heard a thousand blended notes,
> While in a grove I sat reclined,
> In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
> Bring sad thoughts to the mind.
>
> "To her fair works did nature link
> The human soul that through me ran;
> And much it grieved my heart to think
> What man has made of man."

In book I of *The Republic*, Plato made the observation that

> "Mankind censure injustice fearing that they may be the victims of it, and not because they shrink from committing it."

And Michael de Jouvenal, in his foreword to a twentieth century work on the history of the disintegration of ancient Greece, urges that

> "we study history to learn from history, to acquire political prudence".

The ideal of peace among the nations of our world has twice during the course of this century inspired the institution of a body to moderate, if not regulate, international interaction. Regrettably, with respect to both of those initiatives, the focus was on the avoidance of war and not on the concept of peace, so insightfully adumbrated by Aquinas as the tranquillity of order.

The League of Nations collapsed ignominiously. It perished for lack of honour. It was unfaithful to even the rather limited principles upon which it had been founded. The weak were sacrificed on the altar of expediency, in veneration of military might. So ended the first attempt at seeking to realize international peace through the pursuit of avoiding war. Continued appeasement and non-involvement then spawned the Second World War.

Yet, following the horrors of the Second World War, which prompted the setting up of the United Nations, the late Winston Churchill, in persuading the British people and, indeed, the rest of the world, to join in the second attempt to pursue peace among nations, advised that

"To jaw-jaw is better than to war-war".

History records that we have not succeeded in avoiding war.

As we in the Assembly engage in the observation of events among nations, as well as within them, the Grenada delegation sincerely and humbly suggests that we should reflect on the question of why we have not examined relevant history to acquire the relevant political prudence?

Can it be that there still exists among us a predominating subscription to the notion that might is right? Or is it that there remains an overriding precept which determines the operations of the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies: that wealth necessarily merits the enjoyment of special privileges — albeit to the significant disadvantage of the less wealthy, and especially the poor?

Can it be that such a precept continues to inform perceptions as to what is truly acceptable in relation to the composition of the Security Council and the veto?

History attests to the human experience across the entire spectrum, in the context of the *Pax Romana* as well as the rule of recent empires.

When will we acquire the political prudence to order human interaction, within and among nations, so that the resulting tranquillity will ensure that peace will prevail in our world?

It is with deep humility that Grenada suggests that peace among men and among nations will be realized only when human rights are truly respected and honoured universally. Indeed, Grenada submits that the several human rights which have been individually identified may all be encapsulated within a single enunciation: the right to the realization of the fullness of human dignity on the part of every person.

In this regard, Grenada expresses concern about the fate of the Kuwaiti prisoners whose human rights are being violated as we speak.

Prominent among the causes of erosion of human dignity are poverty and deprivation in relation to the prerequisites for the sustaining of life. In this regard, physical disablement warrants particular inclusion as a significant cause of erosion of human dignity.

Accordingly, Grenada supports unequivocally the call for the eradication of poverty from our world and urges that this objective be pursued as a matter of urgency. Grenada expresses deep concern over the sanctioning by the United Nations of trade embargoes which include food and medicines. Grenada humbly urges that this kind of mandate be speedily revisited. As to maiming injury, Grenada urges that all anti-personnel landmines now in existence be destroyed, and further production banned forthwith. Moreover, Grenada now repeats another of its earlier exhortations: that the battlefields of war, past and present, should, as a United Nations sponsored project, be cleared of all weapons of war which still possess the potential for causing injury and even death, to dumb animals or to man.

In narcotics there resides an extremely powerful potential for the erosion of human dignity. The voluntary use of illicit drugs by individuals does not negate this destructive potential. Indeed, such voluntary indulgence merely hastens the transformation of latent potential into virulent activity.

Accordingly, Grenada urges the United Nations to be increasingly unrelenting in its campaign against narco-trafficking. Indeed, we suggest that the United Nations — with support as is appropriate in each case — sponsor national programmes whose purpose is to eradicate the use of illicit drugs by the pupils and students in our schools, and by all youths throughout our world.

In this regard, we applaud the drug abuse reduction education (DARE) project and commend it for use throughout the world, modified as may be most appropriate to particular circumstances.

Disasters occur in many forms. Yet whether natural in origin or the product of human device, physical disasters constitute a most significant threat to human dignity, as they do to human life.

As to natural disasters, humankind is aware of that threat. Hence the awe experienced when we are confronted by such disasters. That very feeling of awe, though, may well, in its embrace, extend to an acceptance of the consequences as being inevitable — and

less only in degree than the inevitability of the disaster itself. This may well explain the inadequacies of actions for disaster preparedness which are so regularly observable. We must confront this form of resignation.

We must also confront the deliberate and wilful human imposition of physical disaster.

Human dignity is assaulted also by economic disaster. Recent experiences in the Far East, and the current ones in other parts of our world, bear telling testimony to this.

Grenada contends that the United Nations and its relevant subsidiary bodies, as well as its appropriate agencies and agents, must, as a matter of conscience, revisit the concept of globalization which has informed various regimes, especially in relation to trade of all kinds, which have caused such degradation of human dignity and such pain among the peoples of the world.

Trade that is not informed by concern for humanness does not promote human well-being. Indeed, it cannot. For the very ignoring of such concern is one of the hallmarks of a diabolical origin.

Our world needs to be humanity-centred and humanity-friendly. Grenada urges that we regulate the many systems which together compose our global interactions.

Grenada humbly invites attention to, and consideration of, the observations of an international non-governmental organization committee on human rights in trade and investment. By a letter dated 20 July 1998, the committee invited our Prime Minister and our Foreign Minister to reflect on some potential threats to our people's enjoyment of their human rights. The potential for these threats resides in one or another of the multilateral investment agreements and the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements.

Five such threats were identified, and we accept the validity of the arguments adduced in each case. Nonetheless, only three are presented here so as to stimulate curiosity, and thus further contemplation.

First, the human right to self-determination embraces the right of all peoples to determine their economic future. This subsidiary right may well be frustrated, if not denied, where freedom is given to foreign investors to operate without a requirement of social responsibility to the overall community in which they do business.

Secondly, pursuance of the concept of non-discrimination in trade and investment may well militate against the pursuit of governmental policy to eliminate unjust discrimination, on the one hand, and, on the other, to promote the relaxation of equality on the part of vulnerable groups.

Thirdly, stipulated conditions in favour of foreign investors may very well be inimical to the right to realize the fullness of one's human dignity.

Earth, with its physical environment, is a divine gift to all the people of the world, and there devolves upon all of us a collective responsibility to protect both our planet-home and its environment. Further, we have been given authority over the locality in which we choose to live — such authority, however, not extending to destructively impinging on any other similar locality, irrespective of its size or population. Thus, every nation has the right to develop the resources of its territory, but not to the detriment of the people of any other nation.

Accordingly, to engage in the transportation of nuclear waste through the terrestrial or marine environments of other countries is to engage in violating the human rights of the people of those countries. The same is true of dumping toxic waste, or food considered in the country of origin or of processing to be hazardous to health, on the markets of the less developed countries of our world.

Attention has already been invited in this presentation to the ignominious collapse of the League of Nations, as well as to the cause of that calamity. Suffice it, therefore, simply to refer now to instances of membership in the Untied Nations of both components of what hitherto were single sovereign States.

The people of the Republic of China on Taiwan — and they number more than 22 million — have exercised the right to participate in international organizations, including the United Nations. And in the further exercise of that right, they have chosen to contribute internationally towards the realization by the peoples of the less developed countries of the fullness of their human dignity. And the Republic of China on Taiwan has chosen to do so within the compass of certain regional and international organizations which are associated in one way or another with the United Nations system. To deny those 22 million people the right to exercise that choice is to violate their human right to choose. Further, to engage in such denial is also to enforce a restriction on

the enjoyment of enhanced benefit by the peoples of States which are members of those organizations.

Grenada therefore calls for the granting to the Republic of China on Taiwan of an appropriate form of membership that would allow for participation by the Republic of China on Taiwan in the World Health Organization, the World Trade Organization and the Caribbean Development Bank.

Grenada does not condone terrorism. Indeed, we condemn it, whosoever the perpetrators may be. In so condemning terrorism, we are especially mindful of the vicious action-reaction spiral relating to engagement in terrorist activity, whose viciousness increases with each cycle. And in this latter regard we perceive as engaging in terrorism any action that is calculated to strike terror into the minds and hearts of people anywhere.

Quite early in this presentation, reference was made to Aquinas's concept of peace. But no attention has yet been given here to the achievement of the tranquillity of order, which Aquinas defines as peace. Comment has, however, been made on aggression and violations of one kind or another. Accordingly, it is fitting that this presentation should end with a succinct elaboration of Aquinas's concept of peace, which it must be stated, is not taken from any of the works of Aquinas. Rather, it is taken from a little booklet entitled *Golden Moments*, and this particular piece bears the caption "If there is":

> "If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character. If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. When there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world".

May God bless everyone who participates in the deliberations of this Assembly, whatever the business or occasion, so that this Assembly may truly be a blessing on our world.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is His Excellency The Honourable Mapopa Chipeta, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malawi.

Mr. Chipeta (Malawi): It was the wish of His Excellency Mr. Bakili Muluzi, President of the Republic of Malawi, to come and address the General Assembly in person, but owing to pressing commitments at home he has been unable to do so. I therefore deliver this statement on his behalf.

Let me join preceding speakers in conveying deep sympathy to the peoples of the Caribbean region and of the southern United States with regard to the natural disaster, in the form of a hurricane which has struck them over the past few days.

Let me congratulate Mr. Didier Opertti on his election to the presidency of the current session of the General Assembly and to affirm our confidence in his ability to conduct the work of this session successfully. I would like also to pay a special tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine, for the innovative and constructive manner in which he carried out his task during the fifty-second session. His wit and sense of humour helped the Assembly accomplish so much during a very difficult session, which was probably a turning-point in the work of the United Nations. The reforms that we agreed upon during the reform Assembly should surely provide the necessary momentum for a more efficient and effective United Nations.

Let me also express my sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, especially for the manner in which he has shouldered his important responsibilities. His outstanding leadership role, particularly with regard to United Nations reform, the problems of my own continent, Africa, and during the recent Iraq crisis has put the United Nations back at centre stage in its meaningful engagement in international affairs. We encourage the Secretary-General to continue his good work with the same dynamic spirit so as to better adapt the Organization to the current and future needs of mankind.

Malawi fully supports the reforms that are being undertaken by the United Nations. We have no doubt that they will not only increase the effectiveness and efficiency of our Organization, but also enable it to respond effectively and in a timely manner to new challenges. I particularly welcome the creation of the post of Deputy Secretary-General. I believe that with this new office the United Nations will continue to play a central role in promoting economic and social development and enhancing assistance for development, particularly to developing countries.

The development agenda, focusing on the eradication of poverty and the provision of basic amenities to humankind, corresponds to the efforts of the

Organization in the area of peace and security. They indeed complement each other.

Malawi looks forward to the finalization of the remaining issues on the reform package, including proposals on the Millennium Assembly, which we fully support.

This year's session of the General Assembly comes at a time when we are commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We believe it is now time to take stock of the progress that has been made in the promotion and protection of human rights since the Universal Declaration was adopted in 1948 and identify additional ways and means to help enhance the promotion and protection of human rights universally.

The United Nations machinery for the promotion and protection of human rights has done an impeccable job in the past, and Malawi places a lot of trust in it to do even better in the near future, particularly in a reformed United Nations where a human rights culture will permeate the system as a whole. While recognizing the critical role played by the United Nations in this field, we also believe that Member States hold the key to a world free of impunity, a global society where human rights transcend all our apparent divisions.

We should therefore not only preach the promotion and protection of human rights but also put into practice what we preach and deepen our understanding of the subject. Since the concept of human rights may not be clearly understood by many sectors of our societies, the success of building a human rights culture across our societies will depend on the ability of our Governments and civil society to provide civic education to the people.

In Malawi we have created necessary institutions, such as the Human Rights Commission, the Law Reform Commission, the Office of the Ombudsman and the Anti-corruption Bureau which, together with various non-governmental organizations, are playing a critical role in enhancing a deeper understanding of human rights as well as related issues of governance.

As we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, our optimism about a better future based on the rule of law and respect for the rights of others has been further fortified by the adoption last July in Rome of the Statute on the establishment of the International Criminal Court. Malawi fully supports this Court and looks forward to the early entry into force of the Statute and the finalization of the outstanding issues before the Preparatory Commission.

However, we pause in our optimism about a better world because of certain trends and developments. Malawi is particularly disturbed by the recent wave of terrorist acts. Terrorism is a threat to peace, security and stability, and therefore cannot be condoned in whatever form or manifestation. We condemn terrorism and reject this cowardly phenomenon as a means of resolving disputes, misunderstandings or political differences. We believe that collectively we should redouble our efforts to deal with terrorism by establishing more measures aimed at its total elimination. Malawi also strongly condemns the barbaric acts of terrorism that took place during August in Nairobi, Kenya; Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania; Omagh, Northern Ireland; and Cape Town, South Africa.

Similarly, we are gravely concerned about the amassing of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, which threaten the future of mankind. Recent tests by some countries confirm our fears. We cannot place blame on these countries alone, so long as others possess these weapons. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) regimes are not an end in themselves. We believe that our ultimate goal should be the complete elimination of all these dangerous weapons within a specific time frame, so as to guarantee the safety of the world.

As we approach the new millennium, it is important that all the existing contradictions which hinder the achievement of global peace and security be removed. One way of doing this is to abide by relevant international instruments. In this regard, I wish to inform the Assembly that Malawi has recently ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Convention on anti-personnel mines. Malawi welcomes the coming into force of the Convention on anti-personnel mines. We appeal to all States which have not yet done so to become parties to these instruments without further delay.

Malawi has a long-standing history of peace, as well as social and political stability. In 1994 Malawians opted for a democratic multi-party system of government which guarantees fundamental freedoms to every citizen. In the last four years we have established democratic institutions that stand for the rule of law and good governance, as well as respect for fundamental freedoms such as transparency and accountability. We have managed to

achieve these because of the peace and stability that now prevail in our country. The right to peace is a right that we cherish for all. The development that we seek for the world cannot be realized without security and peace.

Within our region Malawi attaches considerable importance to cooperation with respect to conflict prevention and resolution. The commendable work undertaken through the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution deserves special mention. Given the magnitude and complexity of the problems to be resolved, that body needs increased support from the international community to accomplish its laudable goals.

We believe that the best way to resolve disputes or conflicts in order to guarantee durable peace, security and stability is through amicable negotiation and not force. Malawi therefore welcomes the Secretary-General's report on Africa and the interest it has generated. We are encouraged by the positive interventions that the United Nations has made to date. The debate of the Security Council last week at Foreign Minister level will only fortify Africa's resolve to galvanize its collective political will.

Indeed, Malawi applauds the commitment of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. Despite all the efforts of the United Nations — during which many have lost their lives in the service of peace — conflicts and factional wars continue in various parts of the world, causing death, massive displacements of populations and floods of refugees and loss of property. Angola, Kosovo, Afghanistan and other parts of the globe continue to furnish tragic examples of the problems that beset us.

We are disturbed by developments in Angola. The delay in the implementation of the Lusaka peace accord and the non-compliance with various Security Council resolutions are of grave concern to us. The people of Angola deserve much better. The ultimate tribute to the late Mr. Alioune Blondin Beye and all the many others that have died in the quest for peace would be the restoration of peace and reconciliation in Angola. We therefore call on UNITA in particular to take all necessary steps to facilitate the implementation of the remaining issues under the Lusaka peace accord in order to give the people of Angola a chance for peace and security.

We are equally concerned with the developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Malawi supports the decisions taken by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) at its recent summit meeting in Mauritius. Peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the whole Great Lakes region will only make Africa realize its vast potential.

In Burundi, the Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, the Comoros and Guinea-Bissau, and between Ethiopia and Eritrea, dialogue must prevail in the search for solutions to the problems that affect them. We call on all parties to give a peaceful resolution of their problems a chance in order for them to achieve a lasting solution. Kosovo and Afghanistan continue to bleed, while hunger and despair ravage the southern belly of the Sudan, and the humanitarian crisis in Somalia continues. The international community can indeed make a difference.

In Sierra Leone, we express our relief that the democratically elected Government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah has resumed its rightful place. We applaud the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the OAU in this regard. We support the initiatives that President Kabbah is pursuing as the country starts the long, slow process of reconstruction and rehabilitation. Malawi welcomes the developments in Nigeria, and we encourage President Abubakar to forge ahead with all the necessary reforms towards the restoration of democratic rule in Nigeria. In Western Sahara, Malawi is following the developments with keen interest. We welcome the Houston accords and look forward to the referendum later in the year.

The overwhelming adoption on 7 July last of resolution 52/250 on Palestine was a clear manifestation of the international community's desire to begin a new chapter in the Middle East. As with civilization, peace and security in the Middle East would no doubt have a reverberating effect on developments in world affairs as we enter into the next century. We call upon Israel and the Palestinian Authority to bring fresh impetus to their negotiations. Malawi welcomes the current initiatives aimed at giving new momentum to the negotiations. Malawi also welcomes the recent developments on the question relating to the Lockerbie disaster. We trust these developments will lead to an early resolution of the matter and therefore an urgent lifting of sanctions against Libya.

One of the major issues for the United Nations is the concern for national identity. In this century nations have been born. Great nations have disintegrated, while

others have found new solutions and come back together. It is in this spirit of helping the powers of healing that Malawi stands to reiterate its conviction that the question of the participation of the Republic of China on Taiwan in the activities of the United Nations on the basis of respect for the principle of universality and the sovereign equality of States deserves consideration. Malawi believes that appropriate participation by the Republic of China on Taiwan in the international community would be an important factor for peace, stability and international cooperation in that part of the world.

Malawi will hold general elections next year. This follows the multiparty elections held in 1994, the first in 30 years. During that election, the United Democratic Front took the reins of power following a free, fair and credible electoral process. The change that we decided upon is irreversible, and all necessary measures are being taken to consolidate the new dispensation. We are committed to facilitating the exercise by all of our people of their civil and political rights. The Government of Malawi is committed to holding free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections.

We therefore invite the international community to come to Malawi and witness the electoral process. At the same time, we appeal to it, particularly development partners, to help us with logistical, financial and human resource support. Free and fair elections can be realized only through the provision of adequate resources. We expect the United Nations to play a critical role in this overall effort, which the people of Malawi so desire.

Since the multiparty Government was ushered in, it has striven to increase the pace of economic reform in Malawi. We value economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, in the same way as we do civil and political rights. We believe that the private sector should be the engine of economic growth and that the duty of the Government is to create a conducive environment. In this respect, the Government of Malawi has embarked on a privatization process, disengaging itself from the commercially oriented parastatals.

Apart from the conducive investment climate obtaining in Malawi, banking and financial services have also been liberalized. The economic and financial reforms that we have embarked on can be successfully sustained only if they are backed by adequate support from the international community, including a favourable international economic climate.

The world trade and financial outlook, however, appears hostile for commodity-dependent countries like Malawi. As we approach the next millennium, the negative effects of globalization and liberalization, particularly on weak economies, should be addressed with the necessary resolve and in a holistic fashion. The persistence of poverty in the world, particularly in Africa, requires the elaboration within the various bodies of coherent policies to confront the major problems that impede development. External debt, deteriorating terms of trade, difficulties in or lack of access to international markets, declining official development assistance and the negative effect of structural adjustment programmes all form a myriad of issues that require urgent attention.

All these issues have to be addressed within the context of the need for the rational utilization of the world's natural resources and the need to protect the environment. The world cannot remain aloof as poverty and despair wreak havoc on many of our people. The many gains that we will have made in civil and political rights will have no meaning at all if the socioeconomic ills that the people confront are not addressed. We are encouraged by the high-level dialogue held here recently. What is needed is action to realize fully the economic, social and cultural rights that we also seek.

The founding fathers of this Organization gave us an instrument which has withstood the test of time. It remains a relevant instrument. As we prepare for the third millennium, let us operationalize it in partnership for the global community, so that we may together triumph over suffering and despair.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in the exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that, in accordance with decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply shall be limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Mwamba Kapanga (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*interpretation from French*): This morning the Assembly heard a statement by the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda. When the aggression began, the Government of

the Democratic Republic of the Congo condemned Uganda's involvement in its territory, and Ugandan authorities denied outright that their armed forces had participated in the hostilities. But the international community now knows, since the questioning of the Ugandan President by his country's Parliament, that the Ugandan army violated Congolese borders and occupied several cities in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In exercising its right of reply, my delegation is in a good position to offer clarifications that will once again enable representatives to better understand the nature of the aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo that has gone on for more than a month.

I will not reiterate the details already given in our statements of 23 September 1998, but I must ask: even if, as the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda affirmed this morning, our two countries had an agreement on security cooperation along our common border, would this give Uganda the right to send its troops to attack Kisangani, the third most important Congolese city, which is located more than 500 kilometres from the Ugandan border? Even worse, thousands of Ugandan military personnel are dispersed throughout the hinterlands of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and have attacked Kitona, Moanda, Banana, Boma and Matadi, which are more than 2,000 kilometres away, in the extreme south-west of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Moreover, it is astounding to note that Uganda continues to invoke the provisions of the alleged agreement in defiance of the presidential decree of 28 July 1998 putting an end to military cooperation and calling for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Congolese territory. This step was taken by President Laurent-Désiré Kabila after consultation with and in agreement with his Rwandan and Ugandan colleagues.

We must ask ourselves whether the celebrated agreement of which Uganda is now so proud is so flexible as to authorize an uninvited foreign army to take part in conflicts designed to destabilize the very partner with which the agreement was signed. The First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda has justified, on the basis of security reasons, his country's aggression against the peaceful people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while at the same time claiming that it is Ugandan armed bands hostile to the Kampala Government that are pillaging Congolese villages. Why is it then that the loyalist Ugandan troops who are in Congolese territory in order to ensure the tranquillity of their countrymen along the border are unable to halt these infiltrations and their after-effects? This question concerns my delegation, as it should the whole international community.

What the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda did not say is that the troops of his country have engaged in rape, plunder, extortion, assassinations and the forced induction of children into their army. In some instances these children have been coldly shot down for refusing to join. Entire villages have disappeared from the map of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a result of barbarous acts committed by the Ugandan invaders. The Assembly should also note the Ugandans' destructive nature, evident in the lack of compunction they have shown about dismantling economic and industrial infrastructure in the country. Do Members think that these acts are likely to promote the subregion's stability and security – of which the Ugandans would like to be the great champions? The Democratic Republic of the Congo believes that the Ugandans must give up such musings, and it is time for all who have been encouraging these activities to persuade the Ugandans to stop.

On behalf of my Government, and given the resolutions of the last summit in Libreville, I call upon the international community to recognize that the settlement of this conflict presupposes the unconditional withdrawal of the invading Ugandan troops and their allies. If the international community truly wants stability in the subregion, the mono-ethnic powers and armies that are working to establish ethnic supremacy in this part of Africa must be persuaded instead to promote integration and equality among all segments of their societies through the democratization of their regimes and the holding of transparent and free elections. By doing this, they will put an end to the political turmoil, the massive displacements of people throughout the region, external aggression and the invasion of their territories, as well as to the attempts to destabilize and break up States.

Mr. Acemah (Uganda): I would like to make a few remarks for the record in response to the statement just made by the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Contrary to the allegations which have just been made by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda

has never invaded that country. Ugandan troops have not attacked or occupied any of the towns that were mentioned, including Kisangani. Uganda has not committed aggression against our neighbour, the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is purely an internal affair of that country. As a neighbour, we are naturally concerned about its implications for Uganda's peace and security, as well as for peace and security in our subregion.

Uganda's position on this matter was clearly stated by my Minister this morning. For the record, let me say that since last year it has been mutually agreed between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo that our two countries would jointly operate in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the purpose of containing and eventually removing bandits and terrorists who have been operating from bases located in the eastern part of that country and destabilizing Uganda. Pursuant to the understanding between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda has maintained a military presence in the eastern part of that country in accordance with the provisions of the bilateral agreement between the two countries.

Uganda has no territorial designs on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is not the primary responsibility of Uganda to dictate political arrangements in that country. However, any internal political arrangements in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that do not cater to Uganda's legitimate security concerns will naturally be of concern to us.

We would therefore like to state that we are not involved in the internal conflict in that country. Indeed, since the 1960s, Uganda has provided support to all progressive and patriotic forces there. Uganda has hosted and continues to host thousands of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Our outstanding record in our bilateral relations with that country speaks for itself.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.